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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

DISTRICT OF OREGON

PORTLAND DIVISION

O.M., by and through her parent and
guardian, K.C. MOULTRIE,

No. 3:21-cv-00683

Plaintiff,

v.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S SOCCER
LEAGUE, LLC,

**DECLARATION OF BECKY SAUERBRUNN
IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF'S MOTION
FOR TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER
AND PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

Defendant.

DECLARATION OF BECKY SAUERBRUNN

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1746, I, BECKY SAUERBRUNN, do hereby declare under penalty of perjury, as follows:

1. I am over the age of 18 years old and make this Declaration from my personal knowledge as stated herein.
2. I am a professional soccer player. I play for the Portland Thorns of the NWSL. I am also the captain of the U.S. Women's National Team.
3. I am 35 years old and have substantial experience in the soccer world.
4. I know O.M., since she practices with our Portland Thorns professional team. I have seen her play in scrimmages and have played with her many times.
5. When I heard about the controversy over whether she could join the League, and before I spoke with her lawyers about this, I posted the following on Twitter:

Just to be clear, [O.M.] is a pro in all but matchdays. She should be able to play in the NWSL and we should be nurturing young talent—allowing them to develop by playing against the best. Let her play.

6. I firmly believe that O.M. could play in the League if the League permitted it. She is exceptionally advanced and mature for a 15-year-old, and one of America's best young prospects.

7. As I said on Twitter, "we should be nurturing young talent—allowing them to develop by playing against the best." The League is doing the opposite by keeping her out of games that count. Keeping her out of League play can slow her development, delay her improvement, and more generally impede her career. Playing against top professional competition, when the opponents play their hardest and when your failures have consequences, is how you learn to be at your best. Practice and scrimmages are very helpful, but nothing is a full substitute for real competition.

8. From speaking with O.M., I know she wants to play on the National team at some point and compete in events like the Olympics. Her progress toward those goals will be delayed if she can't play. I'm sure she would like to be a starter for her professional team and ultimately an All-Star in the NWSL, but her progress toward those goals will also be delayed if she can't play.

9. A soccer player's career is finite. If she spends two-and-a-half years (or some lesser period) barred from the League, there is no way to recover that lost time and the valuable experience she could be gaining by competing against the best week-in and week-out.

10. I can think of no good reason why 15, 16 and 17-year-olds should be categorically barred from the NWSL. If they can't play at the professional level for lack of talent, they won't be signed to a contract. If they can play, bring them on. Competition for places in the League

should be wide open, because the best players create the most excitement, bring in the most fans, and generate the best financial results. If the League strives to be best in class, allowing O.M. and other talented young women to play helps the League reach that goal.

11. I was not aware that there was an 18-year-old minimum age requirement until this controversy arose regarding O.M.. I do not believe I was aware of an 18-year-old age requirement two years ago, when O.M. decided to forego a scholarship at UNC.

12. I also find this age restriction to be sexist considering the MLS does not have the same rule, and both the leagues are the top divisions for their respective genders. USSF, MLS and NWSL work closely together and are viewed as the coordinated face of U.S. Soccer, and women should not be denied opportunities that men have in this national structure.

13. The rule also handicaps U.S. Women's soccer internationally, since other countries allow women under the age of 18 to play, which enhances their skills and experience. Those nations will have an advantage over the U.S. in international play if our young stars develop more slowly. The U.S. National Team is the pride of the U.S. soccer world, and it should not be handicapped by this discriminatory rule.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Executed on May 5, 2021.

DocuSigned by:

Becky Sauerbrunn

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BECKY SAUERBRUNN